

PUBLIC SAFETY & PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE

Of the

Suffolk County Legislature

Minutes

A special meeting of the Public Safety & Public Information Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on May 24, 2006.

Members Present:

Legislator Jack Eddington • Chairman
Legislator Kate Browning • Vice•Chair
Legislator Wayne Horsley
Legislator Vivian Vilorio•Fisher
Legislator Joseph Caracappa
Legislator Daniel Losquadro
Legislator Jay Schneiderman

Also In Attendance:

Renee Ortiz • Chief Deputy Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature
Linda Burkhardt • Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Bob Knight • Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Lora Gellerstein • Aide to Legislator Cooper
Carl Yellon • Aide to Legislator Kennedy
Jim Maggio • Legislative Budget Review Office
Jill Moss • Legislative Budget Review Office

Rosalind Gazes • Legislative Budget Review Office
Ben Zwirn • Assistant County Executive
Joe Williams • Commissioner/Fire, Rescue & Emergency Services
Alan Otto • Chief of Staff/Suffolk County Sheriff's Office
Joseph Rubacka • Deputy Warden/Suffolk County Sheriff's Office
John McElhone • Chief of Support Services/Suffolk County Police Dept
Robert Scharf • Lieutenant/Staff Services Bureau/SCPD
Stuart Cameron • Deputy Inspector/Special Patrol Bureau/SCPD
Susan Vail • Budget Office/Suffolk County Police Department
Bill Gardner • Technical Services/Suffolk County Police Dept
Carmine Chiuvisano • County Executive's Budget Office
Susanne Martin • County Executive's Budget Office
All Other Interested Parties

Minutes Taken By:

Alison Mahoney • Court Stenographer

(*The meeting was called to order at 2:04 P.M. *)

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

We'll start with a Pledge of Allegiance; Legislator Horsley?

Salutation

Okay, we're going to start with the proposed Capital Budget Projects. Is there anybody that would like to ask any questions? No questions? Are there any Legislators that have any questions concerning anything that •• we have •• I know we have Joe Williams from FRES here.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Is there anybody from the Police?

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

No?

LEG. HORSLEY:

No Police, I guess they're content.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

I know we have Chief Otto here, any questions for any part of the Sheriff's?

LEG. HORSLEY:

Yeah.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

What keys do you have for "crickets chirping"?

LEG. HORSLEY:

Joe, the CERT Program, how are we doing now? Are we all •• are we good for the year?

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:

Yes. Once, I guess, we figure out the •• once we were notified I guess about the funding, I think we were all in agreement that we need to do that program with the extra money and I guess it was a question about where that funding was going to come from.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Right, that was resolved, that was the \$30,000, but is that going to carry you through to the next year? What are we getting for next year, is there any monies coming from the Feds?

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:

Well, this year we got I believe it was \$48,000, we won't know that for a while. We have also been told, what I understand is that that used to be a separate grant that may be part of our total Homeland Security Grant, we won't know that until we have the meeting which should be coming up in a couple of weeks. They used to separate that grant out to us, now what's happening is that I understand it may be part of our total grant money we get from Homeland Security, we may have to break that out. But it is an important program, we have every intention of continuing it and we have to,

I guess, prioritize our programs, but we won't know that final answer for a couple of weeks.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay. So when they give you this lump, it's your commitment to continue funding the CERT Program with Federal monies.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:

Yes, with Federal monies. We need to prioritize but it is a very important program.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay. A commitment.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:

A commitment.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Good.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Chief, did you want to say anything?

CHIEF OTTO:

Yes, we have a brief presentation.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay, come on right up.

CHIEF OTTO:

Good afternoon. We would first like to take this opportunity to thank both the County Executive's Budget Office as well as the Legislative Budget Review Office for the time and effort they spent on a very comprehensive evaluation of all five of our Capital Projects. They really did a good job and if you look at the reports you can see what I'm talking about.

We are, indeed, pleased to report that after independent analysis of our

requested projects, the Budget Review Office has recommended that all five be included in the 07•09 Capital Program. We would like to provide a brief overview of the two new projects that we have requested. The first is Capital Project 3060 which includes funding in subsequent years for the purchase of replacement radios due to FCC regulations of rebanding this year and narrow banding in the near future.

The second is Capital Project 3047 which includes \$225,000 in funding in 2009 for the purchase of a replacement four•wheel drive tow truck and a replacement tractor trailer and accompanying trailer.

The Budget Review Office recommended advancing 125,000 in funding to replace the tractor and trailer from '09 to '07 since it is unreliable and the cost to repairs are mounting. They also recommended advancing the \$100,000 in funding for the four•wheel drive tow truck from '09 to '08 since it's use for life is also in question. BRO has suggested that both these purchases could be made sooner using pay•as•you•go funding instead of serial bonds. The Sheriff's Office agrees that these two replacement vehicles should be purchased sooner rather than later. We requested their replacement in 2009 because we fully realized that the County is currently facing a significant budget shortfall for '07 and '06. We also realize that the construction of the new correctional facility is the single largest Capital Project in the program and that project must take precedence over all other needs.

Nevertheless, if there is a way to finance these two vehicle sooner without a significant impact on the County's financial burden, it would make economic sense to fund these vehicles as recommended by BRO. I would ask that the Legislature consider the action of advancing these funds to 2007 as part of an adopting resolution.

Capital Project 3008 provides funding for the new correctional facility at Yaphank. It must be pointed out that the original Phase I plan under the prior administration did not provide any additional cell capacity; it would have simply replaced beds obtained through variances with beds provided for new construction. After Phase I was completed, Suffolk County's Correctional System would have continued to have the same degree of overcrowding and we would have continued to spend millions of dollars on housing out inmates in other County jails throughout the State. We would

have spent 134 million, not including debt services, with absolutely no advancement towards solving our overcrowding problem, thereby making Phase II inevitable.

Today I'm pleased to report that we have a Phase I that provides 204 more beds while reducing the overall cost of the project by seven million. Moreover, by providing these 204 additional beds sooner rather than later, we go a long way towards eliminating both overcrowding and the use of substitute jails earlier at the end of Phase I instead of at the end of Phase II. It also reduces the escalating cost of future construction with the ultimate goal of totally eliminating the need for Phase II.

Capital Project 3013, this project provides funding for a two-story, 3,700 square foot expansion of our Headquarters Bureau which is located in the Criminal Courts Building. This work included space for administrative offices and an expanded squad room and a locker area. As you may recall, the original space was designed between 17 and 20 Deputy Sheriffs, however in 1995 the expansion of our administrative offices at our main facility resulted in the relocation of the entire Deputy Sheriff Squad Room to the Criminal Courts Building; as a result we now have between 70 and 80 Deputy Sheriffs working in a space designed between 17 and 20.

Resolution 1012-05 appropriated 150,000 in planning funds and a preliminary design has already been worked out between the Sheriff's Office, DPW and an RFP for the design consultant is due to let out this month. The environmental concerns have been resolved and the permits have been approved in conjunction with the County Center project; it's going along on schedule, we appreciate it.

Finally, Capital Project 3014, this is the Capital Project which calls for numerous repairs to the Riverhead Correctional Facility. The maximum security section of this building is 37 years old and it has been operating under severe overcrowded conditions since 1980. Phase I of this project includes nine specific items, the most significant being the replacement of the fire alarm system. Phase II also involves a number of items, one of which involves the renovation one of the medium security pods into a direct supervision pod as a pilot project which, of course, is affiliated with the new

facility.

And that's the end of our presentation, if there are any questions.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Well, I would say so you're pretty happy right now with what you're hearing so far.

CHIEF OTTO:

We're actually making a lot of progress. I've personally worked for the County 32 years and we're actually seeing some of our things coming to a final close, so we appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Good, good. Anybody have any questions? No. Okay, thank you very much.

CHIEF OTTO:

Thank you.

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Actually, before they go, let me ••

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Oh, yeah. Just hold on there, Chief.

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Chief, you asked us to advance possibly the funding for the vehicles; what was the price on those vehicles again? I'm sure you said them.

CHIEF OTTO:

There's two vehicles, one was \$100,000 and the other one was 125,000.

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Now you asked for '07, would '06 be appropriate?

CHIEF OTTO:

If there's •• it's always better to do it sooner than later because of the repairs. The vehicles have over like 275,000 miles on them, they're really extremely old; the sooner the better.

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Jim, would that •• seeing that we don't have a waiver on the 5•25•5 just yet for '06, would these vehicles qualify with an appropriate offset in the Capital Budget for '06?

MR. MAGGIO:

Absolutely; with an appropriate offset, it's something that we can do this year.

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Why don't we look at the Legislature's offset account for '06 and maybe we can do a resolution taking care of that sooner than later. And once the resolution is drafted, I'll send it over to the Chief or Sheriff DeMarco who just showed up; welcome, Sheriff.

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

Hello.

MR. MAGGIO:

Both items?

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Both items.

MR. MAGGIO:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

It makes sense.

CHIEF OTTO:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay, thank you. Sheriff, do you want to add anything?

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

No.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

They did a great job.

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

That was easy, thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay, thanks. I saw a representative from the Police Department.

Did anybody want to comment on any of the •• okay.

CHIEF McELHONE:

Good afternoon. My name is John McElhone, I'm Chief of Support Services for the Suffolk Police Department. Commissioner Dormer was called away, we had a seizure of a large amount of fireworks last night on a traffic stop on Sunrise Highway and it's blossoming into a major investigation, so he's detained out in Westhampton.

I don't have a presentation but I'll be happy to answer any questions that you might have on our Capital Budget as submitted and the comments from Budget Review Office.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

How are you feeling about where the cell tower, Rocky Point is progressing?

CHIEF McELHONE:

We're making progress there with the Water Authority. They've stepped up to the plate and are going to do a lot of groundwork on their own facility there, it passed SEQRA last week; we're making a lot of progress there. Right now the County Attorney's Office has yet to sign an agreement with the Water Authority and from there we'll be able to advance the resolution and progress rapidly, hopefully, from there.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay, that's Northport, right?

CHIEF McELHONE:

No, this is Rocky Point.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

No. Jack?

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Oh, that's Rocky Point? Oh, okay. How about the Northport?

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Yes?

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

I was just going to make a comment on Rocky Point, if I may.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Sure.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

In discussions with the Water Authority and with the County Attorney's Office, I was in the back, I was trying to finish up phone calls as fast as I could. But the Water Authority has agreed to make the necessary site improvements, that will not fall, that burden will not fall on the County. And to my understanding, in discussions with both sides, a substantive agreement has been reached on the Memorandum of Understanding, although it has yet to be signed but I believe that is forthcoming.

MR. ZWIRN:

Did CEQ meet?

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

CEQ met, it has been approved and everything should be ready to go at this point. So for the next meeting hopefully we're there.

MR. ZWIRN:

That's great. With respect to Northport, the meetings have been postponed, I mean, at the request of the VA. So it's going to be the first week in June, I think there's another meeting scheduled for all the parties to try to get that one going. We think we're okay, we're just trying to find out to make sure we're not just, you know, being bounced around. But they've been helpful and I think Mr. Gardner who has been ••

CHIEF McELHONE:

He was expected here today, but I was at those earlier meetings and we've scaled down the project slightly. The VA has become a lot more cooperative, in the beginning it was, "We don't want you welding on the water tank at all," and now they've agreed if we inspect it before and after the project they will also meet their part of the bargain and drain the water tower. What we have to do now is actually have finalized plans that they will agree upon and once we have that, then we can decide where we're going to •• with any radio tower there's also a structure that has to go on the ground, wiring and when we get them to agree with the new plan of what will go on the water tower, then we'll be able to take the next step and plot out the rest of it.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Chief Moore, I spoke to him yesterday; it kind of sounded like it's moving in a very positive direction and this is going to happen.

(*Legislator Browning entered the meeting at 2:17 P.M.*)

CHIEF McELHONE:

That's my sense from what ••

MR. ZWIRN:

Well, it's been going on for a lot of years. We're hoping this •• and the other one is going to be in Caumsett Park over in Lloyd Harbor.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Right, and that's moving along also.

MR. ZWIRN:

The State has been cooperative and very helpful, so hopefully we'll get all three of them up this year.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Could we get an update before the next Public Safety meeting on where the status is on all three?

MR. ZWIRN:

Oh, sure.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay, great. Any other questions?

LEG. HORSLEY:

Yes, just quickly. I'm not sure the relevance to this hearing, but have you heard, John, anything about mold issues in the 1st Precinct, the status of it?

CHIEF McELHONE:

There was issues in the 1st Precinct.

LEG. HORSLEY:

People have been telling me about this and I just wanted to see ••

CHIEF McELHONE:

It's been taken care of from DPW. At this point we're trying to purchase some dehumidifiers for the areas in the precinct that don't have adequate circulation which might precipitate a future mold problem, but it has been remediated at this point through cooperation with DPW.

LEG. HORSLEY:

And it's been inspected that the mold has been remediated?

CHIEF McELHONE:

That's my understanding at this point, yes.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay. And you said that you're trying to get dehumidifiers; have we gotten dehumidifiers or we're trying to get dehumidifiers?

CHIEF McELHONE:

I believe we're still in the process of obtaining them, I don't think we have them yet for the 1st. There's other precincts also that are in a similar situation, the 6th, the new 6th being one of them, and it's something that we're pursuing.

LEG. HORSLEY:

You know, having just bought a dehumidifier at Home Depot, how hard is it to get one?

CHIEF McELHONE:

I'm sure it's more of a commercial grade and ••

LEG. HORSLEY:

It must be on State contract, that doesn't sound like a big deal. I mean, can't we just get them?

CHIEF McELHONE:

We have them specked out and priced and I guess at this point it's in purchasing, in that area where we're trying to obtain it. I'll follow•up on that 1st Precinct.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Would you do that?

CHIEF McELHONE:

Yeah, absolutely.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Yeah, thank you. I appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Obviously, with the weather coming in and stuff, it's a very timely matter. Legislator Browning.

LEG. BROWNING:

Hi. How are you? I'm sorry I'm late. I was approached by actually some military people over at Islip that have actually been to the Islip helicopter unit, have taken a tour of it.

CHIEF McELHONE:

McArthur Airport?

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah, at the airport, and they were telling me how deplorable the conditions are at the Islip hangar and where these guys are working.

I know we're buying these beautiful helicopters, but the conditions these guys are working in I believe are horrendous. Is there any plans to update the conditions of their work environment?

CHIEF McELHONE:

Well, that's subject to an existing Capital Project that goes back actually six years. In 2000 we put in a project to redevelop the upstairs at the Special Patrol Building, in the hangar area itself we have trailers where the medical people are staying with overhead wires, it's unsafe and I have to agree with you.

The money has been allocated, there was a problem with the lease with Islip Town, that's been addressed. Now the major sticking point at this point is a permit from Islip Town to continue with the work and there was a generator that was funded originally in the original Capital Project that because it wasn't acted on in five years fell off the table. Now, I know that there's another process through an offset or some other way that we're going to build that back into the project and hopefully we can get that moving rather quickly as soon as we get the permits.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay, thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. Legislator Losquadro.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

This ties into the Capital Budget in the sense that we had appropriated a fair sum of money and some additional monies this year to complete the renovations to the old 6th Precinct building in Coram which is now just about completed, I think in about •• according to the latest estimates from Department of Public Works, hopefully within approximately a month's time the building will be ready for habitation again. I have given deference to the Police Commissioner on many occasions, he said he's been reluctant to name a unit for fear of creating speculation as to what police unit might be going there. And I understand he has a department to run, but coming now towards the point where the building will be occupied again, I just want to make certain that there is still a commitment on the part of the Police Department to house a police unit in there. I know we've had discussions ongoing about Probation and that's fine, but we want to have an adaptive reuse of that building; it makes perfect sense, if we have an existing County facility, to use it in the best manner possible. But there was a commitment made prior to my tenure which the Commissioner said that he was going to uphold to house a police unit in that building in some capacity. So now that we're coming towards that, I'd ask you to relay that back to the Commissioner, please have him respond to this committee or to me directly as to what decisions are being made as to which unit would be housed in that facility. Thank you.

CHIEF McELHONE:

I'll pass that back to him, sir.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay, I guess that's it then. Thank you very much.

All right, any other questions or comments from anybody? Okay, then I'll

ask for a motion to adjourn. Legislator Caracappa, a second by Legislator Losquadro. Okay, thank you very much.

(*The meeting was adjourned at 2:23 P.M.*)

***Legislator Jack Eddington, Chairman
Public Safety & Public Information Committee***

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